

03 / 02313

STATEMENT

Application/Decision



DOE CIRCULAR 18/84

NOTICE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON BEHALF OF THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

AWE ALDERMASTON

PROPOSED LASER RESEARCH FACILITY

OUTLINE PLANNING CLEARANCE

1. BACKGROUND.....2

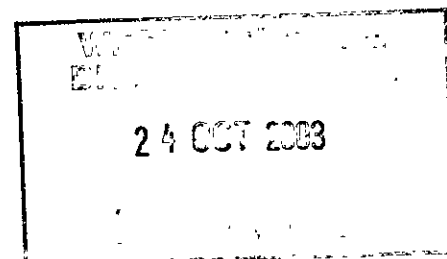
2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....2

3. LOCATION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....2

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT.....3

5. PROCUREMENT AND RESERVED MATTERS.....4

6. ANNEX A: PROPOSAL DRAWINGS.....4



1. BACKGROUND.

AWE plc is in the process of modernising the facilities and improving the visual impact of the Aldermaston site through a major investment programme which will result in the removal and replacement of a large number of outdated and inefficient buildings and the creation of a modern and efficient technology environment. The aim is to provide world class science and technology facilities, to create a more attractive place to work and at the same time lessen the physical and visual impact on the local area.

AWE proposes to build a replacement laser research facility at the western end of the site. The development will replace an existing laser research facility on site, which is now 20 years old. The development will include research facilities, offices, workshop areas, and laboratories.

The development will be designed to meet modern standards and to accommodate approximately 50 staff, transferred from the existing facility on site. No increase in staff is anticipated and there will be no new jobs created. The development will be designed to be highly energy efficient, with a 50 year minimum design life.

The overall development at this West End of the Aldermaston Site will comprise three main facilities, this replacement Laser Facility, a new Conference Centre and a replacement Office Accommodation development. These are as described in the Public Information Leaflet about The Site Development Plan published in June 2002 and updated in September 2003.

2. DESCRIPTION of PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

The proposed building will be in keeping with the current overall development of the Aldermaston site and will be located in an area already populated with industrial buildings of similar height and mass.

The building will be no more than 26 metres high on the eastern elevation. The western elevation, most immediately visible to the public, will be a maximum of 21 metres in height. The approximate footprint dimensions are 110 metres long and 60 metres wide.

The development will comprise space for laser generation plant, a target hall for the laser experiments, preparation rooms, laser diagnostics, laser development, optical coating and photometry. There will also be general office areas, a conference room, a control room, clean rooms, and a visitor/ exhibition area all contained in the same building. In addition there will be minor buildings to house plant immediately adjacent to the main building.

The laser facility is used to conduct experiments on minute particles of matter for the study of plasma physics. Experiments are conducted in a controlled and enclosed environment with shielding up to five feet thick which ensures that no hazard is created outside the controlled environment.

3. LOCATION of PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

The proposed location is shown in Appendix A, section 6.1. This is a brownfield site with no other beneficial use. The development will be visible from the public road, A340, at Paices Hill, for a short distance 100 metres from the proposed building at its closest point. However the building will be well screened by existing trees on the site perimeter, further enhanced by new planting ensuring minimal visual impact.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT.

As the development falls outside the description and scope of developments covered in either Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999, a formal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed development has not been provided.

The anticipated programme for the construction of the New Laser Facility is shown below

Site Preparation	February 2004 to September 2004
Earworks, excavation, sub structures and Superstructure	September 2004 through to August 2005
Handover	September 2005 through to November 2005

This programme is subject to confirmation at detail design stage.

There will not be a permanent increase in traffic at the West Gate entrance (A340) to site as a consequence of this development. It is considered that because the staff are already employed at AWE they will continue to enter site at an entrance dependant on where they live, rather than switching to using the West Gate. In any case, the number of persons employed in this facility is small in relation to overall site numbers. Visitors are likely to be in small numbers, 10 or 20 at a time being the maximum likely figure.

Any increased traffic during the construction period will reduce back to the site norm very rapidly. No significant new employment will arise due to this development and no significant changes to traffic patterns will occur.

A number of buildings have been demolished in the vicinity of the development (See in Appendix A at 6.2). Concrete and brickwork arisings from the site clearance, having received free from hazard clearance for removal, have been crushed and stored on site for re-use as backfill material, thus avoiding HGV movements from site and landfill disposal issues. The amount currently stored is of the order of 3600 cubic metres, which has resulted in 258 fewer lorry loads being transported on the public highway. In addition to this approximately 7000 cubic metres has been used on the site as infill thus resulting in a further 600 fewer lorry loads using the public highway.

The development will be designed to minimise energy useage as far as is practicable. To this end the provisions of the "Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method" (BREEAM) will be met with a target award of "Excellent".

Among other energy saving methods, use will be made of the following to reduce energy usage in non-experimental areas:

- Water saving devices (e.g. 'Hippos' in cisterns)
- High efficiency thermal insulation of the building
- Heat transfer (eg in heating and cooling plant)
- Natural ventilation
- Energy efficient lighting (presence and daylight detection) in office and toilet areas
- High efficiency boilers

5. RESERVED MATTERS

As concept drawings have still to be prepared the final detail of the following matters will be reserved until designs are submitted:-

- Height
- Size of the buildings
- Final siting within the identified area
- External appearance and material selection
- Amenity features
- Landscaping

APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL DRAWINGS

5.1. Site Plan Ref West End/Planning/001

5.2. Layout of Demolished Buildings Ref West End/Demolition/Planning/001

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

Name and Address of Agent (if any)

Name and Address of Applicant

South East And Germany (B J Ritchie)
Blanford House
Farnborough Road
Aldershot
Hants

PART I - DETAILS OF APPLICATION

Date of Application

28th October 2003

Application No.

03/02313/OUT

THE PROPOSAL AND LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT:

DOE CIRCULAR 18/84 - Proposed Laser Research facility - Outline Planning

PART II - DECISION

In pursuance of its powers under Circular 18/84, West Berkshire District Council RAISES NO OBJECTION TO the development referred to in Part I in accordance with the submitted application form and plans, subject to the following reasons:-

INFORMATIVE(S):

1. The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that above conditions must be complied with in full before any work commences on site, failure to do so may result in enforcement action being instigated.
2. For further information regarding the discharge of the conditions or any other matters relating to the decision, please contact the Customer Call Centre on 01635 519111.
3. The applicant's attention is drawn to the request by Members of the Thatcham Area Planning Sub Committee that further consideration be given to the height and siting of the building when submitting the 'reserved matters' application in order to reduce the visual impact of the proposed building.

Decision Date :- 17th December 2003



Gary Lugg
HEAD OF PLANNING & TRANSPORT
STRATEGY

Item No	Application No. and Parish	Proposal, Location and Applicant
(5)	03/02313/OUT Aldermaston	Circular 18/84 Notice of Proposed Development for proposed laser research facility (outline) AWE, Aldermaston. Ministry of Defence.

Recommendation Summary: **That the Head of Planning and Transport Strategy be authorised to raise no objections.**

Ward Member(s): Councillor Irene Neill

Reason for Committee determination: Level of objection and request by Councillor O Jeffery

Committee Site Visit: N/A

Contact Officer Details

Name: Lisa Smith
Job Title: Principal Planning Officer
Tel No: (01635) 519111
E-mail Address: lmsmith@westberks.gov.uk

Site History

A number of proposals submitted in relation to the site – see site number 101084

Publicity of Application

Site Notice Expired 9th December 2003

Press Notices:

Newbury Weekly News Expired 4th December 2003

Reading Chronicle Expired 27th November 2003

Neighbour Notification Expired 4th December 2003

Consultations and Representations

Parish Council: Comments Awaited

Highways: No objection

Adj Parish Council: Tadley - Comments Awaited

Basingstoke & No objections raised

Deane BC:

Public Protection: Insufficient information submitted to enable Public Protection to form any opinion.

HSE: This development will be governed by the conditions of the nuclear site licence or other health and safety legislation. There is no objection on health and safety grounds to the issue of planning permission.

Correspondence:

77 letters of objection received, together with a public petition containing 101 signatures, as at 3/12/03 mainly on grounds of nature/use of site, health and safety and that public inquiry should be held as this is not a local issue, rather than planning considerations relating to the potential impact of the proposed building. However, 3 of these raise objections on grounds of:

- visual impact of the building on the surrounding area - site in general is a sprawling eyesore;
- impact on residential amenity;
- traffic generation from construction and extra staff;
- any new employment will be specialised posts and will not provide employment to local people and could lead to additional pressure on housing market;
- no environmental impact assessment submitted

Further petition from the Nuclear Awareness Group (NAG) containing 14 signatures received raising objections but no details of those are given.

Policy Considerations

Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 – ‘General Policy and Principles’ – March 1992

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 –Transport– March 2001

Berkshire Structure Plan – Policy LD3 (Environmental Impact of Development), Policy C2 Development Outside Built Up Areas and Settlements)

West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 – Policy ENV.18 (Control of Development in the Countryside); ENV.25 (Defence and Government Establishments in the Countryside); Policy OVS.2 (Core Policy)

Description of Development

This application is a Notification of Proposed Development submitted under Circular 18/84. This form of application is specifically for applications on crown land and Government establishments. Government Circular 18/84 sets out the background and procedures to be followed in this type of application. Essentially, it is processed in the same way as a normal planning application and should be determined within the usual 8 week statutory period.

The Notification has been submitted in outline form for a building to be used for laser research purposes. Detailed matters regarding design, external appearance and landscaping are reserved for later consideration. The proposed building will be 110m in length, 60m in width, with a maximum height of 26m. It is to be sited on the south western part of the site, between the existing recreational area and a number of existing buildings immediately to the north, approximately 100m back into the site from the A340 Paices Hill.

The supporting information submitted with the application states that the building seeks to replace an existing laser research facility which is now 20 years old and will include research facilities, offices, workshop areas and laboratories.

The new building will accommodate staff who are to be transferred from the existing research facility on site. It is not anticipated that there will be an increase in staffing levels.

The proposal forms part of a wider scheme for the overall development at the western part of the site, which includes a new conference centre and replacement office accommodation. Both of these elements have not yet been formally submitted for consideration under Circular 18/84, but have been identified in AWE's Public Information Leaflet 'Site Development Strategy Plan' published in June 2002 and updated in September 2003 and also their approximate locations are shown on the site plan submitted in respect of this Notification.

Consideration of the Proposal

The development falls outside the descriptions of development referred to in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999 and therefore an Environmental Statement is not required in this case.

Paragraph 2.52 of the WBDLP refers specifically to defence and Government establishments in the countryside and states at 2.52.1 that "*applications submitted for Crown development relating to existing establishments would be supported where required for the continuation of operational activities related to the use of the establishment within the context of the other policies in the Plan*".

The Site Development Strategy Plan published by AWE advises that the Ministry of Defence has stated the need for the Aldermaston site to continue its operation and therefore the principle of further development to allow the continuation of operational activities is acceptable, subject to compliance with other policies of the Development Plan.

The main issue in this case is the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area

It is acknowledged that given the size of the proposed building, it will have a visual impact, particularly from views into the site from the A340 at Paices Hill. However, when taken in context with the site surroundings and the fact it will be read against the backdrop of the many existing buildings at the AWE site, your Officers consider the visual impact will not be unduly harmful.

Whilst it may have been preferable to site the building further back into the site on a similar location as the area identified for future additional buildings for the conference centre and office accommodation, it is considered that on balance, the siting proposed under this Notification is considered acceptable.

Full Recommendation

That the Head of Planning and Transport Strategy be authorised to raise no objections to the Notice of Proposed Development.